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Provisional summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 15 January 2003, at 11 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. Šimonović ..... (Croatia)
President: Mr. Rosenthal ..... (Guatemala)

Contents

Opening of the session

Election of the President

Election of the Bureau

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Other matters

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The meeting was called to order at 11.20 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Temporary President** declared open the organizational session of the Economic and Social Council for 2003.

2. He welcomed the newly elected members of the Council for 2003 and thanked the members of the Council elected for 2002 for their contribution. Reviewing the achievements of the Council during the past year, he said that, with the help of the Bureau and the Secretariat, the Council had been able to conduct a successful substantive session in July 2002. During the high-level segment of that session, major advances had been achieved on the subject of human resources development, and the Council had adopted a Ministerial Declaration, which had given new impetus to Governments, the United Nations system and civil society to work towards better health and education for all.

3. The segment on operational activities had been focused mainly on funding for the development work of United Nations funds and programmes, and harmonizing and simplifying their procedures. The Council had also extensively discussed the evaluation of the effectiveness of the development work of the United Nations system. The Council should continue to follow up on the interest expressed by many delegations in ensuring that the segment provided overall policy guidance to the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

4. The coordination segment had focused on how to strengthen the Council and make its work more influential and effective. The Council had adopted conclusions reached during the segment that should allow for strengthening the contribution of the Council to integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, although much remained to be done in that regard.

5. During the humanitarian affairs segment, the Council had given guidance for reinforcing the coordination of the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system. It had also stressed the importance of ensuring a smooth transition from relief to development while focusing on vulnerable groups. That transition was particularly relevant in the light of the increasing engagement of the Council in post-conflict peacebuilding.

6. In the general segment, the Council had made progress in strengthening the functioning and coordinating the work of its subsidiary bodies. In that connection, a meeting of the Bureau with all the chairpersons of the functional commissions had been organized in 2002, for the first time, followed by a panel discussion with members of the Council. That meeting had provided a forum to discuss the coordination of the work of the functional commissions and cooperation between those commissions and with the Council and had contributed to strengthening the relationship between the Council and the functional commissions. It had also been used to emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming in all activities of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. The Council had established a support secretariat for the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Mixing governmental and non-governmental representatives in the same body might prove to be a far-reaching precedent for the future of the United Nations.

7. The Council had also addressed other issues in 2002 that would likely continue to be priorities in years to come. In the area of peacebuilding and conflict prevention, the Council had agreed during its substantive session to establish ad hoc advisory groups for African countries emerging from conflict, which would be responsible for helping to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of those countries, to review relevant programmes of support, to make recommendations for a long-term programme of support and to ensure that the international assistance provided to them was adequate and coherent. Guinea-Bissau had been the first country to request that such an advisory group be formed to assist it. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, which the Council had established in October 2002, had visited the country in November 2002 and prepared a report to be presented to the Council during the current meeting. The international community must find coherent ways of resolving problems of countries emerging from conflict and assist them in meeting all the requirements to receive donor assistance.

8. There had been increased interaction between the Council and the Security Council in 2002 in the area of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. The Council had been in contact with the Security Council several

times, and successive Security Council Presidents had addressed the Council during its high-level segment and during the commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the signing of the general peace agreement in Mozambique. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau had worked closely with the Chairman of the Security Council Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa, which had allowed the two bodies to evaluate social, economic and security issues at the same time and proved to be an excellent working method for the Ad Hoc Advisory Group.

9. The Council must do its best to support the General Assembly, especially the Second and Third Committees, and avoid overlap in their work and meetings. The issue had been raised throughout the past year with the President of the General Assembly and the chairpersons of the Second Committee, but more systematic efforts were needed to make substantial progress in that regard. Regarding cooperation between the main United Nations organs, he had taken the initiative during the past year to hold several informal meetings with the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council. Future Presidents of those bodies should further improve their cooperation and coordination.

10. Another area in which the Council had been very active in the past year was its relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions, which could be the basis for broader-based and more inclusive global economic decision-making. The World Trade Organization (WTO) had participated in the spring meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions for the first time in 2002 and would be taking part in the meeting to be organized in spring 2003. There were also plans to have representatives of non-governmental organizations and the private sector participate in the 2003 spring meeting, as they had done in 2002.

11. The last important issue of particular concern to the Council in 2002 was follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. It was crucial that the Council should advance the follow-up to the efforts of Governments that were currently working to meet the commitments that they had undertaken during the major conferences of the 1990s, the Millennium Summit, the Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Summit.

12. In conclusion, in order for the Council to have a real impact on the lives of the people most in need of support, it must increase its influence gradually and, to that end, strengthen ties to Governments, increase interaction with senior-level policymakers and take into account the contributions of non-governmental organizations, the private sector, national and local authorities, academia and other non-State actors in the work of the Council. The Council must be fully utilized as a catalyst in the eradication of poverty and implementation of the development targets put forward in the Millennium Declaration.

Election of the President

13. **The Temporary President** said that, in accordance with rule 18 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, it was the turn of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to assume the presidency of the Council. He had been informed by the Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group, that it wished to nominate Mr. Gert Rosenthal (Guatemala) for the office of President. Consequently, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to elect Mr. Gert Rosenthal as President of the Council.

14. *Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala) was elected President by acclamation.*

15. *Mr. Rosenthal took the Chair.*

16. **The President**, taking up the general issue of the role of the Council, said that some people continued to have doubts about the nature of that role and had difficulty distinguishing it from the role of the General Assembly, particularly the Second Committee.

17. The Charter defined the role of the Council very broadly in Articles 62 and 63, and it was the General Assembly that ultimately had defined it best and most precisely in many of the resolutions that it had adopted during the first half of the 1990s, including resolutions 46/235, 48/162 and especially 50/227. That role had been clarified once again during the past year in the Plan of Action adopted at the Johannesburg Summit and in the Monterrey Consensus. It should be noted, however, that the role of the Council within the United Nations system was reflected not only in documents but also in past experience. The Council fulfilled essentially five functions.

18. First of all, the Council was a forum for debate on development issues. It had responsibility in that capacity for considering the development and human rights problems that Member States must tackle. It helped to raise awareness of their importance and implications and provided guidance for resolving them at the country level and within the framework of international cooperation.

19. The second function of the Council was to hold meetings to discuss substantive issues and how to enhance the consistency and coordination of activities carried out by United Nations agencies and the non-governmental organizations that worked with them. The meetings that the Council organized every year since 1998 with the Bretton Woods institutions should be mentioned in that regard, as they were particularly relevant in the light of the provisions of the Monterrey Consensus, which made the Council the foremost intermediary between the United Nations and the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and WTO. The Council was also the principal point of contact with non-governmental organizations, academia and private businesses that wished to be involved in United Nations activities.

20. The third function of the Council was monitoring, supervision and verification, which consisted mainly in guiding and orchestrating the work of subsidiary bodies under its authority (in other words, the 10 functional commissions, five regional commissions and various standing committees and groups of experts). The Council could and should ensure that the work of those bodies were more consistent and mutually reinforcing.

21. The fourth function of the Council was its operational function, which consisted in offering guidance to the executive boards of United Nations programmes and funds and ensuring that their work was consistent with that of other United Nations entities. The Council performed that function particularly during the discussion of operational activities for development, held during the substantive session at the intergovernmental level.

22. The fifth function of the Council was continuous monitoring of the activities conducted by United Nations agencies in the economic and social areas to ensure that they fulfilled the mandates entrusted to them, in accordance with established guidelines. That involved, in particular, coordinated and comprehensive follow-up to major United Nations conferences such as the Millennium Summit.

23. Of course, the Council did not work in isolation. Because it was under the authority of the General Assembly in accordance with the Charter (Article 60), the Council must report to it on its activities. With regard to the Security Council, at the request of the Security Council and the General Assembly, the Council had begun to intervene in the economic and social aspects of conflict prevention and rehabilitation of countries emerging from conflict, as was shown, for example, by the establishment of ad hoc advisory groups for African countries emerging from conflict.

24. In short, the Council was the United Nations organ with responsibility for ensuring coordination and promoting interaction between the various entities of the United Nations system, and also between those entities and others that, although outside the system, worked with it. Just as the Security Council specialized in matters of peace, security and disarmament, the Economic and Social Council specialized in matters of development and human rights. To fulfil its mandate, it could rely not only on the Secretariat but also on the five regional commissions, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the support services of subsidiary bodies located in Geneva, Nairobi and Vienna. The members of the Council would surely continue in 2003 to work to better define the role of the Council in the vast framework of the goal set by the participants in the Millennium Summit of strengthening the United Nations.

Election of the Bureau

25. **The President** said that, in accordance with rule 18 of its rules of procedure, the Council must elect four Vice-Presidents. Following consultations between the regional groups, the following candidates had been proposed: Ms. Marjatta Rasi (Finland), Western European and Others Group; Mr. Murari Raj Sharma (Nepal), Asian Group; Mr. Abdul Mejid Hussein (Ethiopia), African Group; Mr. Valery Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Eastern European Group.

26. *The four candidates were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council for 2003 by acclamation.*

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2003/2)

27. **The President** invited the Council to adopt the provisional agenda (E/2003/2).

28. *The provisional agenda was adopted.*

29. **The President** said that, by adopting resolutions 1988/77 and 1989/14, the Council had decided on certain measures designed to revitalize and improve its functioning. The General Assembly, in its resolutions 45/264, 48/162, 50/227 and 52/12 B, had also approved measures designed to restructure and revitalize the Council. On the basis of the guidelines given in those resolutions, the Council would at its organizational session consider the provisional agenda for the session (E/2003/2) and the note of the Secretary-General containing the proposed basic programme of work of the Council for 2003 and 2004 (E/2003/1).

30. In addition, the matters listed in the provisional agenda required a decision at the organizational session. In accordance with paragraph 2, subparagraph 1, of Council resolution 1988/77, he intended to hold informal consultations on the proposed basic programme of work and other organizational matters. On the basis of those consultations, the Bureau would submit recommendations to the Council at its next meeting.

Report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau

31. **The President** said that decision 2002/304 adopted by the Council on 25 October 2002 provided for consideration by the Council of the report prepared by the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau.

32. **Mr. de Santa Clara Gomes** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau, introduced the preliminary report of the Group. Established in accordance with decision 2002/302 of the Council, on the basis of resolution 2002/1 by which the Council had decided to create advisory groups for African countries emerging from conflict, the Group had been given a mandate to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of Guinea-Bissau to review the relevant programmes of support and to prepare recommendations for a long-term programme of support. The creation of the Group responded to the need for the international community to develop a predictable and coherent manner of assisting countries emerging from conflict that no longer needed peacekeeping support but were not yet ready to receive regular donor assistance with all the requirements associated with such help.

33. Guinea-Bissau was among the least developed countries and ranked 167 out of 173 on the human development index of the United Nations Development Programme in 2002. Its infrastructure and economy had been destroyed during the conflict that had ended in 1999. The country had particularly suffered from the downturn in the market price for cashew nuts, its main export item, and from the decrease in official development assistance, which had made up more than 55 per cent of the State budget, as well as the decision by the International Monetary Fund to suspend its Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility. Because of cash flow problems, the State was experiencing difficulties in meeting the short-term needs of its people. The country is also ridden by political instability arising from weak institutions and the lack of effective separation of power between the executive, legislative and judiciary branches. That instability had arisen again with the dissolution of the Parliament by decision of the President of the Republic in November 2002.

34. The Ad Hoc Advisory Group had met with various stakeholders in Guinea-Bissau, including national political actors, the armed forces, civil society and non-governmental organizations as well as members of the Secretariat and United Nations funds and programmes and the Bretton Woods institutions. It had visited the country from 9 to 16 November 2002. During the mission, the President of Guinea-Bissau had requested the Group to consider how to restore the confidence of the international community in his country. The Group had adopted a two-step approach by which the Government would have to demonstrate strong commitment to stability, good governance and sound financial management and to formulate a long-term strategy for development before the international community could re-engage in the process of development.

35. It had become evident that Guinea-Bissau was facing many short-term challenges that would have an impact on its long-term development, which was why the Group had decided not to limit itself to long-term recommendations, as provided for by its mandate, but to formulate short-term and long-term recommendations addressed to the national authorities, the international community, the donor community, the Bretton Woods

institutions and the United Nations system. The Group recommended establishing a partnership between the Government and the international community based on common objectives and a long-term development strategy. The efforts required of the Government of Guinea-Bissau would be coupled with assistance from the international community, which could include emergency assistance, technical support, election support and development assistance. The partnership could be supported by a temporary trust fund such as the current one being set up by the United Nations Development Programme. Regular reviews of the progress in implementing the recommendations would be made. The implementation of the long-term recommendations called for more active involvement of the international community in the development of Guinea-Bissau and the adoption of measures by the Government to stimulate economic growth and reconstruct the country.

36. Recognizing that the parliamentary elections on 20 April 2003 might have an impact on the feasibility of the implementation of the recommendations, the Group would follow the election results closely. He expressed the hope that the Council would endorse the recommendations contained in the report. The Group would continue to assess the situation in Guinea-Bissau and submit a supplementary report if necessary and if the Council so decided.

Other matters

37. **Mr. Carpio Govea** (Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77 and China, said that the establishment of advisory groups for African countries emerging from conflict had been one of the most remarkable results of the work of the Council in 2002 and that it was important to pursue that course. With respect to paragraph 16 of document E/2003/1, it would be useful to know when the Committee would be established to represent the United Nations during the negotiations with the World Tourism Organization with a view to making that Organization a specialized agency of the United Nations and when negotiations would begin.

38. **Mr. Khan** (Director of the Division for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination) said that the Committee on Negotiations with Intergovernmental Agencies had been established by a decision taken in 1946, but that its membership remained to be determined. In its resolution 2002/24, the Council had authorized its President to appoint the members of the Committee in charge of negotiations with the World Tourism Organization, in consultation with the regional groups. The Secretariat had submitted a draft letter to the President, who would shortly be transmitting it to the regional groups so that they might appoint the countries that wished to take part in the work of the Committee. The Secretariat hoped that, following those consultations, the Committee would be constituted quickly and begin to consider in March the draft relationship agreement between the United Nations and the World Tourism Organization that was being prepared by the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat. The Committee could consequently put the final touches to its report during the spring, which would enable the Council to consider that document at its substantive session in July. The schedule proposed did not seem too ambitious in view of the Council's interest in the issue.

39. **Ms. Dos Santo Jaló** (Guinea-Bissau) welcomed the report of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Guinea-Bissau and expressed the hope that the Council would continue to assist all countries emerging from conflict and not only Guinea-Bissau.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.